



CAMPEPHAGA HUMERALIS: Gould.

CAMPEPHAGA HUMERALIS, *Gould.*

White-shouldered Campephaga.

Ceblepyris humeralis, Gould in Proc. of Zool. Soc., Part V. p. 143; and in Syn. Birds of Australia, Part IV.
Goó-mul-cúl-long, Aborigines of the mountain districts of Western Australia.

THIS bird occurs in considerable numbers throughout the whole of the southern portion of Australia during the months of summer; it is strictly migratory, arriving in the month of September, when insects are most plentiful, and having performed the task of reproduction departs again northwards in the months of January and February. It is a most animated, lively and spirited bird, constantly singing a loud and pretty song while actively engaged in pursuit of insects, which it either captures on the wing, among the branches or on the ground. It commences breeding soon after its arrival, constructing a shallow round nest of small pieces of bark, short dead twigs and grasses interwoven with fine vegetable fibres, cobwebs, white moss, &c., and sometimes a few grasses and fine fibrous roots by way of lining; it is usually placed in the fork of a horizontal dead branch of the apple- and gum-trees, and is not easily seen from below. During the early part of the breeding-season the male frequently chases the female from tree to tree, pouring forth his song all the while. The eggs, which are generally two, but sometimes three in number, differ very considerably in colour, some being of a light green blotched all over with wood-brown, while others have a lighter ground so largely blotched with chestnut-brown as nearly to cover the entire surface of the shell, and I have seen some of an almost uniform greyish green; their medium length is nine and a half lines and breadth seven and a half lines.

The above is a detail of what I myself observed of the bird in New South Wales. In his Notes from Western Australia, Mr. Gilbert says, "This bird is a migratory summer visitant to this part of the country, where it arrives about the beginning of September, after which it is to be met with in considerable numbers among the mountains of the interior, but is very rarely seen in the lowland districts.

"Its powers of flight are considerable, and when excited during the breeding-season the males become very pugnacious, and not only attack each other in the most desperate manner, but also assault much larger birds that may approach the nest. Its usual flight is even, steady and graceful, and while flying from tree to tree it gives utterance to its sweet and agreeable song, which at times is so like the full, swelling, shaking note of the Canary, that it might easily be mistaken for the song of that bird. It is a remarkably shy bird, especially the females, which are so seldom seen that I was at first inclined to think they were much less numerous than the other sex, but this I afterwards found was not the case; their favourite haunts are thickly-wooded places and the most secluded spots. The nest is so diminutive that it is very difficult to detect it, and so shallow in form that it is quite surprising the eggs do not roll out when the branch is shaken by the wind. I am told that they generally build in the Raspberry-Jam-tree, but the nests I discovered were placed on a horizontal dead branch of a Eucalyptus; they were formed of grasses and contained two eggs. It breeds in the latter part of September and the beginning of October." Mr. Gilbert subsequently met with the bird at Port Essington, where also it appears to be migratory, for not a single individual was to be seen from the early part of November to the month of March; females and young birds were very abundant on his arrival in July, but he only met with one old male during his residence in the colony, a period of eight months.

The stomach is muscular, and the food consists of insects of various kinds and their larvæ.

The sexes differ considerably in colour, as will be seen in the accompanying Plate and the following description:—

The male has the forehead, crown of the head, back of the neck and upper part of the back glossy greenish black; shoulders and upper wing-coverts pure white, forming an oblique line along the wing; the remainder of the wing dull black, with the secondaries slightly margined and tipped with white; lower part of the back and rump grey; tail dull black, the two outer feathers on each side largely tipped with white; throat, chest and all the under surface white; bill and feet black; irides nearly black.

The female has all the upper surface, wings and tail brown; wing-coverts and secondaries margined with buff; throat and all the under surface buffy white, with the sides and front of the breast speckled with brown; irides very dark brown; upper mandible and tip of the lower dark reddish brown; basal portion of the latter saffron-yellow; legs and feet dark greyish black, slightly tinged with lead-colour.

The figures represent the two sexes of the size of life.